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Comité consultatif de l'environnement Kativik
Kativik Environmental Advisory Committee

April 2, 2012

Diane Jean
Deputy Minister
Ministère du Développement durable,
de l'Environnement et des Parcs
Marie-Guyart Building, 30th Floor
675 René-Lévesque Blvd. East, Box 02
Quebec City QC G1R 5V7

SUBJECT: Government strategy on climate change adaptation

Dear Madam:

The Kativik Environmental Advisory Committee (KEAC) would like to congratulate the Québec government for its draft government strategy on climate change adaptation 2013–2020. Due to the major current and expected consequences of global warming in Northern Québec, the KEAC feels that it is urgent to identify adaptation measures for Nunavik.

The KEAC is hopeful that, with the implementation of the strategy, the next action plan will place more emphasis on adaptation measures. It is important that such measures be established quickly since the ever-increasing effects of climate change are having a considerable impact on the quality of life of Inuit. Refer to the enclosed document for comments and suggestions prepared by the KEAC that could be integrated into the 2013–2020 action plan.

Finally, given the KEAC's interest in this issue, it would appreciate being kept informed of developments concerning the future action plan.

Sincerely,

Sylvie Létourneau
Chairperson



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**Recommendations concerning the Future
2013-2020 Action Plan on Climate Change**

April 2, 2012

The Kativik Environmental Advisory Committee (KEAC) reviewed the draft *Stratégie gouvernementale d'adaptation aux changements climatiques 2013-2020* (government strategy for climate change adaptation). In light of the significant current and forecast impacts of global warming in Northern Québec, the KEAC believes the necessary adaptation measures must be identified rapidly. These measures should moreover be included in the 2013–2020 action plan to be created under the strategy. Below, the KEAC presents a few of its related comments and suggestions.

1. RISK MANAGEMENT

As clearly indicated in the draft government strategy, the risks associated with climate change are significant in Nunavik and increase the vulnerability of the population. In order to foster the resilience of the natural and social environments, the action plan should provide for the development of a risk management plan that also takes into account characteristics of the North. The action plan should include a diagnosis of the situation, an intervention plan for each Northern village (emergency, maintenance, development, re-development, monitoring and review measures, among others), as well as adapted communications strategies for the targeted population.

Identification of risks

With a view to developing effective adaptation scenarios regarding global warming, a pool of knowledge specific to the region situated north of the 55th parallel should be established regarding public health, biodiversity protection and conservation, as well as the degradation of marine, air and road transportation infrastructure, and built-up areas. The government should continue to foster related research projects and expand its efforts. It should also ensure that collected information is accessible to all stakeholders and especially to the residents of Nunavik.

In this respect, the KEAC suggests that awareness and outreach tools for the Inuit population be developed and adapted, and that relevant mechanisms for disseminating information be planned. To ensure that the Inuit population plays a leading role in these adaptation processes, increased Inuit participation could be ensured, in particular at different stages of research projects.

Public security

The KEAC believes that the measures provided for in the action plan should contribute to improving the safety of Nunavik residents, as well as their quality of life. Accordingly, emergency measures should be planned for essential services: heating, drinking water and emergency communications.

Climate change involves significant and real risks to the health and safety of Inuit, who still today rely heavily on the products of traditional hunting, fishing and trapping for subsistence. As one element of social and cultural cohesion, these activities could be affected: access to the territory could become riskier; the migration routes of some wildlife species could change; and permafrost thawing could result in the further spreading of uncontrolled hazardous materials and the contamination of certain wildlife species. The action plan should promote the dissemination of information that impacts on Inuit activities.

2. DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

Under the Plan Nord, an increase in development projects is expected in Nunavik. This will inevitably lead to greater adaptation pressures in the changing environments.

Mining development

The disposal of mine tailings, surface drainage and contamination prevention measures could become less effective with global warming¹. With this phenomenon in mind, the action plan should require, for example, that project proponents complete the necessary studies and implement the necessary measures to reduce these risks with future authorizations. Project proponents should also be urged to better inform the population of their projects and measures to reduce the impacts of their projects in the context of climate change.

Forest development

The subarctic region of Nunavik possesses an extremely fragile forest ecosystem and climate change will have an impact in forest zones. Currently, there is little information on the consequences of global warming on forests. In previous position papers, the KEAC has recommended that a research group be created to gather and complete knowledge on forest resources in Nunavik. The vulnerability of isolated tree stands, exceptional and important for Aboriginal communities, could increase if cutting grows in the region. The KEAC has also previously requested that any activity likely to adversely affect forests and related ecosystems in the region (example: cutting, logging, etc.) be suspended until such time that it is proven that the environment is not at risk from these activities.

¹ CONSORTIUM OURANOS, *Savoir s'adapter aux changements climatiques*, 2010, p. 22.